

A Malay Ghost Story.

TEXT EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY J. E. NATHAN.

The following story was told me in Raub by a Negri Sembilan Malay, who has been resident for many years in Ulu Pahang, with the result that his idiom and vocabulary bear the traces of both places.

J. E. NATHAN.

Ada-lah sakali persetua didalam negri Pahang orang tiga beranak, laki-nya bernama Jenal dan bini-nya bernama Debus, serta dengan anak jantan sa'ekor¹ bernama Mat Dong. Dan pada suatu hari berchakap Jenal itu kepada bini-nya, "Mari kita menchari tempat membuat ladang padi; boleh kita menanam labu pisang tebu dengan padi sakali."

Lalu iya berjalan dan mendapat suatu tempat yang elok membuat ladang di tepi sungei Chemerka; menebas menebang lagi membakar dan memagar serta mendirikan pondok di tengah ladang itu. Kemudian dia menanam pisang labu tebu dengan padi sakali, dudok-lah di-situ tiga beranak menjaga tanaman-nya jangan dirosak oleh babi dan rusa.

Habis lama lama bekelama'an padi sudah masak dia menuai serta membawa kepada rumah pondok itu. Dan tiada berapa lama-nya Jenal itu jatuh sakit, makan pun ta'buleh, bangun pun ta'buleh, makin sahari makin terok penyakit-nya.

Berchakap-lah mak kepada anak sa'ekor itu. "'Nak 'nak, pergi-lah menjemput wan awak di kampong. Dengan chepat bawa kamari, sebab tentu-lah mati bapa awak." Maka budak itu pun pergi dengar segra handak jeput wan dia. Tiba ka-rumah, "Wan Wan," kata-nya, "Mak minta datang dengan segra. Bapa sakit sangat."

Di-jawab-nya, "Bagimana kita berjalan dengan segra, hari dah malam. Jangan-lah balek; esok pagi-pagi kita pergi berdua."

Tinggal-lah si Debus laki bini di-dalam pondok di-tengah ladang. Maka biru badan si Jenal nak mati, bernapas pun dengan kesusahan. Maka bini berasa takut didalam hati, "Apa kena budak itu ta'balik?"

Dan sa-kejap lagi mati dah bapa itu. Apa-bila bini-nya melihat laki sudah pulang ka-rahmat Allah menangis-lah dia. "Wahai, mati dah bapa anak aku!"

1. 'Ekor' and not 'orang' is almost invariably used by illiterate Malays in Ulu Pahang as the numeral co-efficient for children.

Kemudian di-ambil kain, di-bujor sa'orang sa'orang, di-tutup maiat dengan kain itu; di-ambil pula perasap di-buboh api. Kemudian dia turun menchari daun sireh "Barangkali kalau mak datang senang; ta'payah lagi turun didalam gelap."

Dudok-lah dia sa'orang sa'orang mengupas pinang dengan kachip. Kupas kupas tinjau ka-luar; "Datang kah tidak mak aku ini?" Didalam itu ada-lah bunyi orang di-luar pondok di-kaki tangga. Kata si Debus, "Siapa itu? masok-lah." Di-jawab, "Aku." Masok-lah orang itu rupa-nya seperti sa'orang perempuan yang tua sakali, blakang-nya bongkok, gigi-nya rongak, jari-nya longkai-longkai² dan kuku-nya berchanggai.

Kata dia, "Bila mati laki awak?" Di-jawab oleh bini si mati, "Ini-lah petang sudah senja. Baik juga datang mak ini, kawan sa'orang perempuan di-tengah hutan rimba ini."

Kemudian pergi-lah orang tua itu dekat maiat, buka-lah kain selubong, di-buka dia chium jilat maiat itu lagi pandang ka-kiri ka-kanan. Maka bini si mati sudah tampak kelakuan orang tua itu seperti kelakuan hantu, takut-lah dia serta berpikir "Tentu-lah hantu orang tua ini."

Di-dalam itu dia ambil kachip, dia buat buat mengachip pinang; sampei mengachip dia pandang ka-atas, di-ujong alang di-kepala tiang hantu hantu sahja, berjantai-jantai kaki, seperti Haji pakaian-nya dengan serban besar-besar berambu-rambu. Apa bila di-lihat hantu banyak banyak itu dudok di-a'ang seram seram bulu tengkok-nya dan ketar lutut-nya, takut di-buat oleh hantu itu.

Maka dengan hal yang demikian dia beri jatoh kachip pinang di-bawah rumah. "Hai! Mak," kata dia, "Kachip kawan jatoh ka-bawah. Kawan nak turun ambil" "Jangan ambil, hari malam malam ini. Ini-lah ada pinang terkachip." "Ta'buleh, mak; ta'chukup pinang di-kachip ini. Kawan nak ambil juga." Turun-lah dia mengambil kachip; sudah sampei ka tanah lari selalu. Ada-lah anggaran sa-puluh depa jauh daripada pondok itu, di-dengar 'bus-bus-bus' di-belakang bunyi hantu-hantu turun mengejar.

Maka pikir si Debus, "Jikalau kawan chabut berlari tentu di-dapat oleh hantu ini. Baik juga kawan menyurok." Menyurok-lah dia di-belakang batang kayu besar; lalu-lah hantu sa-kawan itu menonong³ sahaja, tiada sangka perempuan itu sudah simpang menyorok.

2. Apparently the same word as Lengkai which Wilkinson translates 'long and slender, willowy, graceful,' but used here in an uncomplimentary sense.

3. According to Wilkinson "To walk with the body erect but the legs staggering like a drunken man." The narrator called this 'melelong' not 'menonong' and gave to "menonong" the meaning "To walk looking straight ahead without glancing aside."

Maka sa-kejap dia melanggar ibu babi berkubang di-dalam semak; bunyi-lah babi 'Hor-hor-hor.' Pada pikiran hantu bunyi manusia itu. Kata dia, "Di-mana awak menyurok? Kita makan juga nyawa awak malam ini." Dan babi itu di-gomul di-balun oleh hantu mati selalu.⁴

Maka waktu hantu-hantu tengah membunuh babi itu, lari-lah si Debus pusing jauh-jauh, tiada berhenti sakali pun sampei tiba ka-rumah mak bapa.

Kemudian dia cherita kepada mak bapa hal ahual hantu hantu itu. Kata bapa-nya, "Nanti hari siang, kita panggil orang ramai, kita pergi ka-ladang boleh tanam sakali." Dan malam itu tidorlah dia ke-semua-nya.

Hari dah siang berpakat pakat sapuluh lima-belas orang pergi ka-ladang. Tiba ka-pondok naik-lah di-tinjau maiat; kain selubong habis berklabong di-kreja hantu. Maiat pun tertiarap, kepala mengiring tangan-nya simpang perenang, habis lebam-lebam badan-nya di-isap hantu.

Mengangkat-lah maiat itu membawa ka-kubor lalu tanamkan. Ladang itu pun di-tinggal selalu; sampai sekarang siapa-siapa pun tiada berani membuat ladang di Sungei Chemerka itu.

Once upon a time there lived in Pahang a man Jenal with his wife Debus and one boy called Mat Dong; and one day Jenal spoke to his wife. "Let us look for a place to make a clearing and plant padi."

So they set out and found a good place for a clearing on the bank of the river Chemerka. They felled the big timber and cleared the scrub, burnt it off and fenced it and built a hut in the middle of the clearing. Then they planted their plantains and padi with gourds and sugar-cane and lived there, the three of them, guarding their crops from the attacks of pigs and deer.

Months pass and the padi ripened; they reaped it and stored it in their hut. But soon Jenal fell ill; he could not rise or take food; and every day the sickness increased upon him.

Then Debus called her son, "Go and call your grandmother from the kampong, bring her here at once for I fear your father will die." The boy ran off at once and when he reached his grandmother's house, he gave her his mother's message but she replied. "Night is coming on, how can we start at once? You must sleep here and we will start together early to-morrow morning."

So Debus and her husband were left there in their hut in the clearing; and as the hour of his death approached, a grey tinge spread over his body and his breathing was laboured. His wife was troubled in her heart. "Why does not the boy return?"

4. Selalu in Ulu Pahang has almost always the meaning 'forthwith' = langsong. It is rarely used with the meaning "always."

A few more minutes and Jenal was dead; and when his wife saw that his spirit had passed, she wailed and mourned him. Then she fetched a white cloth and covered the corpse with it, composing his limbs and placing a censer at his feet. Then she went down from the house to fetch sireh leaves, hoping all the while that her mother would soon come.

There she was left alone, husking betel nuts with the betel scissors and ever she kept peering into the darkness for her mother's coming. Now all at once she heard the sound of feet climbing the house ladder and she called out, "Who is there? Come in," "It is I" came the answer and there entered an ancient crone, hump backed and gap toothed with long skinny fingers and nails like talons.

"When did your man die?" asked she; and the widow answered. "About dusk this evening; and glad I am that you have come, left alone as I am in the middle of the jungle."

Then the old hag went up to the body and lifted the cloth that covered it; she sniffed at the body and licked it, with furtive glances around her. And when Debus saw her acting thus she was sore afraid for she knew that the old hag was an evil spirit. She took the scissors and pretended to be husking nuts; but while she did so, she glanced above and there all along the beams and joists she saw a row of ghosts, dangling their feet, dressed like Hajis with long tasselled turbans; and when she saw them she shivered and her knees shook with the fear of them.

Seeking for a way to escape, she dropped her scissors to the ground through the floor and cried "Old dame, I have dropped my scissors. I must go out and get them back." "Don't bother! it is dark outside and you have nuts ready husked." "Not enough yet, mother; I'll go and get the scissors."

So she went out and when she reached the ground, she ran away at once; and when she had run perhaps twenty yards, she heard the thud of the ghosts' feet, as they leaped down to chase her. Now Debus thought, "If I simply go on running they'll certainly catch me." So she hid behind a great tree trunk, and the swarm of ghosts rushed past, looking straight in front of them and never dreaming that the woman had turned aside to hide. A second later they ran into a wild sow, grunting as she turned in her wallow, and the ghosts thought it was the woman. "Where are you hiding?" they cried, "wherever it be, we shall have your blood to-night." And they fell on the pig and beat it to death forthwith.

While they were engaged in this, Debus stole away and making a wide turn ran and never stopped till she reached her mother's house. There she told them all that had happened and her father said. "Wait till day break and we'll go in a body to the clearing and bury your man."

At day break they collected ten or fifteen men and went to the clearing; they climbed the ladder and looked at the corpse. The cloth over it was thrown aside in a heap; the body lay on its face with the head turned to one side and the arms awry, and all over it were purple bruises, where the ghosts had sucked the blood.

Then they took the body and buried it in the grave yard. The place was forthwith abandoned, nor to this day can anyone be found daring enough to make a clearing on the banks of this stream.